IIAC Complimentary Card Passes issued to Ex-MPs at Railways cost, were cancelled w.e.f. 06.01.1999 due to a judgement by Allahabad High Court in a Public Interest Litigation. Subsequently, on the basis of an Ordinance promulgated by the President on 18.01.1999, instructions were issued on 02.02.1999 to permit Ex-MPs the same travel facilities on the authority of Ex-MP photo identity cards issued to them by the Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha Secretariat. There is no change in the norm in respect of passes issued to freedom fighters. Disabled are not issued any free passes.

Decline in freight traffic

1207. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been a decline in the freight traffic on Indian Railways during 1998-99;

(b) if so, the target set and the actuals in this regard during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99;

(c) the details of reasons for decline in the freight traffic; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to improve the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The target and actuals of freight traffic on Indian Railways for 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 are as under:

(Figures in million tonnes)

Year	Target	Actuals
1996-97	410.00	409.02
1997-98	430.00	429.38
1998-99 (April-Jan.)	369.10	343.40

(c) Drop in demand from the major core sectors of the economy which include power, coal, foodgrains, cement and steel has been responsible for the fall in the loading level.

(d) Ministry of Railways is maintaining continuous close liaison both with the rail-user organisations as well as the concerned Ministries/Departments for maximising movement of traffic by rail. Also close monitoring is being done both at the field as well as at the Railway Ministry levels to ensure smooth movement of freight traffic.

Killing of five persons by local train in Calcutta

1208. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item 'Bidhannagar a death trap for passengers— Risk your life or miss the train' appearing in the "Statesman", Calcutta dated 14th February, 1999 killing of five people by a local train on 12th February, 1999;

(b) if so, the immediate action taken by the Railway authorities to improve the public address system; and

(c) the short-term and long-term plan to avoid such tragedies, including broadening of over-bridge?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) To ensure safe journey of passengers as well as to prevent accidents, arrangements have been made at Bidhannagar Road Railways Station to ensure that the Public Address System is in working order. Battery back up is also available in case of failure of local power supply and one additional point of loud